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HOSPITALITY IN FOCUS

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MIDDLE EASTERN HOTELIERS SPEND THE MOST ON INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

There were some surprising results in a survey entitled “IT Benchmarking at Property Level (EAME)” produced by Dr Prof Hilary Murphy of Lausanne Hospitality Research at Ecole Hoteliere de Lausanne.

Designed in collaboration with the CIOs of a number of major European hotel companies the report contains useful information on comparative IT spending for owners, GMs, IT managers and IT suppliers to the hospitality sector at property and corporate level. Over four hundred properties responded to the independent study and the results contain key metrics and analyses resulting from the data supplied from mid-scale and upscale property level throughout EAME (Europe Africa Middle East). This is the first report of its kind and it's main contribution will be to provide a first view of the IT expenditure and provide comparative data that, mapped over time, will reveal a very useful analysis of IT expenditure of (and for) the hotel industry in EAME.

One of the key findings was the comparative regional spend (in euros) per property which show the Middle East as having easily the highest property level spend on IT. The next highest levels of investment was in the Mediterranean and then in order behind comes North West Europe, Central and Eastern Europe and finally Africa and the Indian Ocean.

The detailed report also contains data describing not only the demographic description of individual properties but also the average total IT spending in EAME Regions as well as a breakdown of the total IT spending. Also included are figures for CAPEX (Capital Expenditure) & OPEX (Operating Expenses) per room, the IT spend as a percentage of GOR (General Operational Requirement), GOP (Gross Operating Profit), EBITDA (Earnings Before Interest, Tax, Depreciation and Amortisation), IT “yield” and IT “value”. Finally there is a breakdown of both hardware and software expenditure. The report contains comparative breakdowns across the various regions and including a comparison of upscale and mid-scale properties.

INCREASED PRESENCE IN THE UK

A leading provider of innovative information technology and hospitality software solutions has announced its growing presence in both the United

Kingdom and the EMEA (Europe, Middle East and Africa) hospitality markets with its acquisition of Triangle Hospitality Solutions in Warrington, Cheshire.

Agilysys, Inc. announced its growing presence when it recent acquired Triangle Hospitality Solutions in Warrington, Cheshire. Triangle has been the UK-based reseller for the full suite of InfoGenesis solutions offered by Agilysys.

The acquisition also adds the Triangle mPOS solution to the Agilysys hospitality product offering. This is a handheld point-of-sale solution that integrates with the InfoGenesis product suite.

The Triangle and InfoGenesis solutions, along with the Visual One hospitality software suite, will enable Agilysys to expand its customer base across the hospitality industry including gaming, food service, hotels, cruise lines and stadiums. The company has expertise in enterprise architecture and high availability, infrastructure optimization, storage and resource management, identity management and business continuity; and provides industry-specific software, services and expertise to the retail and hospitality markets.

Existing Agilysys customers include:

- Gaming - London Clubs International, London; Stanley Casinos, Liverpool.
- Food Service - Elior UK, London; Lindley Catering, Stoke on Trent.
- Hotels - The Dorchester, London; Four Pillars Hotels, Oxfordshire; The Lanesborough, London; Maybourne Hotel Group, London.
- Cruise Lines - Celebrity Cruises, Miami.
- Stadium & Arena - Lords Cricket Ground, London; Manchester United Football Club, Manchester; O2 Arena, London.

"The acquisition of Triangle Hospitality Solutions enhances the international presence and growth strategy of Agilysys not only in the U.K. but also throughout Europe, the Middle East and Africa and further solidifies our position in the hospitality market," said Tina Stehle, senior vice president and general manager of Agilysys Hospitality Solutions Group. "Our customer base includes large venue and chain hotels as well as resorts and boutique properties. The diversity of our software offering enables us to tailor solutions that meet customers' specific needs, and the integration of our products and modules sets us apart from the competition."

Triangle Hospitality Solutions recently received an IBM Solutions Provider Excellence Award and was also recently cited at the European Retail Solutions Awards for 'Best Use of Technology in a Hospitality Environment' for a multi-faceted project completed for Manchester United Football Club.

A WELCOME BOOST TO BOOKINGS

Welcome Break Group UK, the second largest MSA (Motorway Service Area) operator in the UK with a portfolio of 21 hotels, has signed an agreement to

roll out the new Web 3.0 Channel Management and Internet Distribution platform from BookingBooster to enhance its business processes. The company has a portfolio of service areas which include hotels, KFC, Burger King and WH Smith. The company offers motorway services, goods and amenities including restaurants, shopping and hotels.

The management of Welcome Break identified that the company needed to significantly reduce the time it took to manage its online distribution channels. Previously this function had taken several hours per day to update its rates and availability on its online distribution channels.

“We have to manage our rates and availability on a daily basis across all channels in order to remain competitive” said Darren Woodhouse, Hotels Operations Manager of Welcome Break Group.

“We evaluated a number of tools that were available in the market and chose BookingBooster as it had all the features we wanted and a very easy interface to enable us to manage our rates and availability. In addition, it allows us to prioritise our distribution channels so that we can give our closest partners the best available inventory”

“BookingBooster has spent 18 months on its technology and uses new and innovative Web 2.0 features to assist hoteliers to distribute their products on the Internet. We are delighted to have Welcome Break as a partner” said Peter Carlsen, CEO of BookingBooster. The new BookingBooster systems were trialled at two of Welcome Break’s existing hotels and the remainder were scheduled to be rolled out over a period of two months.

BookingBooster is a privately owned, UK-based company that helps hotel operators and representation companies distribute their inventory across Internet channels. Run by ex-hoteliers and web developers at the cutting edge of technology, the company prides itself on understanding hotel operators’ needs and objectives and the issues they face in everyday work.

ENCOURAGING THOSE ELUSIVE VOTES?

In the UK elections are often seen as an intensely private affair but not so in the United States. Whilst we look on at what sometime seems to be a completely alien electoral process, at least where the election of the US President is concerned, voter education is regarded as being of great importance, even to trade bodies.

It is therefore of no surprise over there that America’s 1.8 million lodging industry employees now have a new online tool to help them actively participate in the federal elections via the American Hotel & Lodging Association’s (AH&LA) new voter education program *www.LodgingVotes.com*.

This online tool offers AH&LA members a single comprehensive political, grassroots action, and voter education Website for the 2008 federal elections. The resources provided include information on local, state and federal elected

officials, downloadable state voter registration forms and absentee ballot voting initiatives, information on Election Day polling locations and hours of operation, key national issues affecting the lodging industry, the latest news on the presidential elections and election calendars and voter issue educational materials.

LodgingVotes.com is free to all AH&LA members and is non-partisan. The site is run in conjunction with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce to create this comprehensive election Website for America's \$139 billion hotel and lodging industry.

"The decisions made during this year's elections are critical to the lodging industry's future. AH&LA is committed to ensuring that our industry will have the latest information tools available to its employers and valued employees before casting their ballot on Election Day," remarked Marlene Colucci, AH&LA executive vice president of public policy.

Links:

- Agilysys: www.agilysys.com
- American Hotel & Lodging Association's (AH&LA) new voter education program: www.LodgingVotes.com.
- BookingBooster: www.bookingbooster.com
- Ecole Hôtelière de Lausanne (EHL): <http://www.ehl.ch>
 - IT benchmarking report info: Hilary.murphy@ehl.ch
- Welcome Break Group: www.welcomebreak.co.uk

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